

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 00114 111804Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5330

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PINS, NU

SUBJECT: CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MANAGUA 0090

SUMMARY: PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO'S ASSASSINATION HAS PROFOUNDLY
AFFECTED ALL NICARAGUA. THERE REMAINS NO INDICATION OF WHO
WAS INVOLVED, WHO ENGINEERED IT, OR WHAT THE MOTIVE WAS. IT IS
POSSIBLE THAT THESE QUESTIONS WILL REMAIN UNANSWERED. END SUMMARY

1. NEWS OF CHAMORRO'S DEATH SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE THROUGHOUT
MANAGUA AND THE COUNTRY. EVERYONE WAS LISTENING TO RADIOS WHICH
ON ONE STATION OR ANOTHER WAS GIVING CONTINUOUS COVERAGE NEARLY
ALL DAY. LARGE CROWDS DEVELOPED AT LA PRENSA, THE CHAMORRO HOME
AND THE HOSPITAL WHERE HE HAD ARRIVED ALREADY DEAD. AFTER THE
AUTOPSY A PRECESSION WAS FORMED TO CARRY HIS REMAINS TO HIS HOME
ACROSS TOWN. THE PROCESSION SWELLED TO SEVERAL THOUSAND DURING
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PAGE 02 MANAGU 00114 111804Z

THE SEVERAL HOUR MARCH THROUGH MANAGUA. POLICE WERE CONSPICUOUSLY
ABSENT. THE GN COMMAND WENT INTO AN IMMEDIATE HUDDLE IN THE OFFICE
OF GEN. JOSE R. SOMOZA AND THE CABINET REPORTEDLY DID LIKEWISE
AT THE MONTELIMAR HOME OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA.

2. EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS AND THE AUTOPSY INDICATE THE APPEARANCE OF
A HIGHLY ORGANIZED ASSASSINATION BY THREE OR FOUR MEN IN TWO

CARS FIRING A SHOTGUN THROUGH THE CAR WINDOW INTO CHAMORRO WHAS WAS TRAVELLING ALONE. THE ASSASSINS TRANSFERRED TO THE SECOND CAR NEAR THE SCENE FOR THEIR ESCAPE. THE OWNERSHIP OF THE ABANDONED CAR WAS QUICKLY ESTABLISHED AND THE FORMER OWNER IN WHOSE NAME IT HAD BEEN REGISTERED TURNED HIMSELF IN AND HIS CHAUFFER WAS ALSO DETAINED FOR QUESTIONING. THE CAR REPORTEDLY HAD BEEN STOLEN BEFORE THE MURDER.

3. THE IMMEDIATE ASSUMPTION OF MOST PERSONS WAS THAT SOMOZA HAD FINALLY ELIMINATED HIS BETE NOIR. ON REFLECTION, OTHER PLAUSIBLE THEORIES HAVE COME FORTH. THE APPARENT PROFESSIONALISM OF THE ASSASSINATION HAS LED MANY TO SPECULATE THAT IT WAS DONE BY AN IMPORTED TEAM. CHAMORRO HAD LAUNCHED A CRUSADE AGAINST A BLOOD PLASMA BUSINESS RUN BY A CUBAN AMERICAN WHICH SOME SAW AS A POSSIBLE MOTIVE FOR RECURRING ASSASSINS FROM THE CUBAN-EXILE COMMUNITY. SOME SPECULATED THAT ONE OF THE FACTIONS OF THE FSLN GUERRILLAS COULD HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE. THE MOTIVE WOULD BE TO SIDETRACK THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE MOVEMENT, PROMOTE INCREASED POLARIZATION AND FURTHER POLITICAL VIOLENCE.

4. PRESIDENT SOMOZA ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF HIS BEING INVOLVED IN A LONG-DISTANCE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW FROM U.S. MEDIA IN WHICH HE SAID IF HE HAD WANTED TO ELIMINATE CHAMORRO THERE WERE MANY PAST OPPORTUNITIES WHEN CHAMORRO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN OR A PRISONER DUE TO REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES. HE WENT ON TO SAY EVEN THROUGH THEY HAD BEEN POLITICAL ENEMIES THAT CHAMORRO HAD FILLED AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MANAGU 00114 111804Z

IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE SOCIETY. UNRELATED TO THE INTERVIEW, HOWEVER, SPECULATION SUGGESTS THAT A SOMOZA SUPPORTER COULD HAVE AUTHORIZED THE ASSASSINATION OUT OF A FALSE SENSE THAT HE WOULD BE PROVIDING A FAVOR FOR SOMOZA.

5. THE ASSASSINATION MAY IN FACT HAVE ENDED THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE INITIATIVE OR AT LEAST CAUSED ITS DELAY. CHAMORRO'S POLITICAL MOVEMENT, UDEL, HAS NOT SAID IT IS PULLING OUT OF THE DIALOGUE.

6. THE NEXT FEW DAYS WILL BE EXTREMELY TENSE AS CHAMORRO'S CASKET IS MOVED TO VARIOUS SITES AROUND THE CITY BEFORE HIS BURIAL. POLITICAL PASSIONS ARE VERY HIGH.

7. THERE HAS BEEN AN OUTPOURING OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF REPUDIATION OF THE ASSASSINATION. IMPORTANTLY THE NATIONAL GUARD COMMAND AND THE SOMOZA-FAMILY NEWSPAPER NOVEDADES HAVE SPOKEN OUT IN CLEAR CONDEMNATION OF THIS CRIME.

8. COMMENT: THE REAXTION IN NICARAGUA TO THE ASSASSINATION HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS UNRPECEDENTED SINCE THE SHOCK SENT THROUGH THE SOCIETY BY THE ASSASSINATION TWENTY YEARS AGO OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA GARCIA. IT CAN PERHAPS BE COMPARED TO THE ASSASSINATION IN THE

U.S. OF REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO RIOTS
YET. IN BOTH CASES A SPOKESMAN FOR VAST NUMBER OF PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY
DISENFRANCHISED PEOPLE, WAS UNEXPECTEDLY AND VIOLENTLY ELIMINATED.
CHAMORRO'S ASSASSINATION WILL LEAVE A SIGNIFICANT VACUUM.
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